

MEEK MANSION AND CARRIAGE HOUSE
240 Hampton Road
San Lorenzo
Alameda County
California

HALS CA-23
CA-23

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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MEEK MANSION AND CARRIAGE HOUSE

HALS NO. CA-23

Location: 240 Hampton Road, San Lorenzo, Alameda County, CA
Lat: 37.684464 Long: -122.113107

Significance: The Meek Mansion property is significant because of its association with William Meek an early California pioneer and prominent member of Alameda County. Meek is noteworthy as an early orchardist who is associated with Henderson and John Lewelling. The gardens are significant as an example of a typical Victorian garden.

History: The Meek Mansion is on land that was once part of Rancho San Lorenzo. It was granted to Guillermo Castro on February 23, 1841 by Governor Juan Alvarado. William Meek of Massachusetts first came west to Oregon where he worked as a pioneer orchardist with Henderson and John Lewelling. They relocated their business to Alameda County in 1859 and by 1806 Meek owned 2010 acres of land where he grew mostly cherry trees. The tree stock came from Iowa and was the first grafted trees planted on the Pacific Coast. He also grew apricot, plum and almond trees. Meek acquired land from Castro where he built his Victorian mansion in 1869 and extensive gardens.

Meek served on the first Board of Trustees for Mills College, and served four terms as an Alameda County supervisor. He organized Haywards first agricultural society, and served as the first president. Meek died in 1880 when the eldest son Horry Meek assumed ownership.

Today the property is owned by the Hayward Area Recreation Department and the Hayward Historical Society. This area became known as "Cherryland" because of the many Cherry trees planted by Meek. The City celebrates the Cherry Festival annually.

The property is enclosed by an ornamental iron fence with masonry columns and has a gracious gate that opens onto a drive to the mansion. Extensive lawns with Victorian-style curving beds of shrubs and perennials surround the mansion and include a variety of species. The property has many magnificent trees including a very large Bay tree at the main entry and an ancient Cherry now fallen but still living within an enclosure.

Behind the house there is a formal parterre defined by Boxwood and planted with roses. The centerpiece of the garden is a large, Italian-style fountain and pool. The carriage house and caretaker's home are part of the property but the water tower, once used to irrigate part of the orchard, has been removed.

Sources: National Register plaque at the site.

Historic Spots in California, third edition by Mildred Brooke Hoover, Hero Eugene Rensch and Ethel Grace Rensch and revised by William N. Abeloe, 1966.

Water Towers, provided by Mary Mactavish
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www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM3EWP

Historian: Chris Pattillo, January 31, 2009
pattillo@PGAdesign.com
PGAdesign
444 17th Street
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 550-8855



Figure 1. Meek gardens with the mansion in the background (Chris Pattillo, January 31, 2009).



Figure 2. Garden fountain and pool (Chris Pattillo, January 31, 2009).